

PRO-FILE SYSTEM: UPDATE

A Report Prepared for the

Legislative Finance Committee

by

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March 1, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

In March 1996, legislative fiscal staff presented to the Finance Committee a report entitled “Evaluating Effectiveness of Corrections Programs”. The report pointed out that due to a lack of data, the department and the legislature had no means to evaluate the effectiveness of treatment programs or education programs in the correctional system. Without an evaluation of these programs to determine if they have an impact on reducing populations, it is hard to know if the programs should be continued, changed, or eliminated.

In response to this report and a recognized need, the 1997 legislature approved a Department of Correction’s request to update and expand the computer system to track offender information. The intent was to increase the reliability of the data, to track data the department needed for its operation, and to capture data that would enable policy decisions. This report gives a brief background on the department’s automation plan and provides a status of the implementation of the automation plan.

BACKGROUND

The original database used by the Department of Corrections was developed in the late 1970s to capture information regarding offenders. The system was called ACIS (Adult Correctional Information System). The data captured by the system filled the basic needs of the department at the time, but the system was cumbersome in its ability to produce reports. Over the years, there became an increased need for: 1) improved tracking of offender statistics; 2) access to data to facilitate the department’s management of offenders; 3) an ability to track data that would facilitate an analysis of the effectiveness of treatment programs and training; and 4) the ability to provide the legislature with better information for their use in making informed decisions.

The 1997 legislature approved 7.5 FTE, \$0.4 million each year in HB 2, and \$1.89 million in HB 188 (the information technology bill for bonded projects) for a total of \$2.7 million for the 1999 biennium to address the department’s automation plan. The \$0.4 million was included as part of the department’s base budget for this project to support the 7.5 FTE funded by the 1997 legislature and for the ongoing operating costs of the automation plan.

After the release of a legislative information technology audit on ACIS in the spring of 1997 and a resulting workflow analysis completed in April of 1998, the department decided to develop a new database system named PRO-Files (Programmed Reporting of Offender’s Files) utilizing current technology, rather than update ACIS. The department believed that the new system would increase the ease of entering data and increase the accuracy of the data.

Table 1 shows the major components of the automation plan that were presented to the 1997 legislature as part of the automation package and the various data elements to be tracked under the new system.

Table 1 Department of Corrections Automation Plan	
Major components of the system:	
1.	Electronic fingerprint system. The new system will have the capability to rapidly determine the offender's identity by a match through the regional and national fingerprint databases.
2.	Development of infrastructure and electronically linking 25 locations
3.	Purchase or lease hardware/software to connect correctional facilities in Montana cities
4.	Upgrade the server to handle the additional modules that will capture the data
5.	Electronic imaging system. Offender photos are captured on the system and will be made available to the department, law enforcement, or other appropriate parties
6.	Integration of systems at the departments' of Public Health and Human Services, Justice, and the Judiciary so all departments have access to more detailed, comprehensive information
Various data goals to be tracked:	
7.	Boot camp information
8.	Juvenile data
9.	Intensive supervision data
10.	Probation and parole data, such as pre-sentence and hearing data
11.	Pre-release information
12.	Release rates by type of facility
13.	Average length of stay in secure custody or probation and parole
14.	Grievances and pending legal cases
15.	Average sentence by type of crime
16.	Number of offenders by type of crime
17.	Types of offenses by inmates in jail holding system
18.	Medical, mental health, and dental data
19.	Educational and training data
20.	Treatment plans
21.	Gang involvement

PRO-FILES BACKGROUND

Currently, PRO-Files is strictly a database management system. The system has been designed so that when data is entered into PRO-Files, needed information in ACIS is updated at the same time. Until all of the information captured by ACIS is replaced by PRO-Files, the two systems will run in tandem. Separate software programs - Crystal Reports, SAS, and Visual Basic - are used to extract the requested data elements from the systems and produce reports. In the very near future, the department plans to add

reporting capabilities to PRO-Files and allow the public to access reports through a web portal.

STATUS

TIMELINE STATUS

A formal completion date was not established for the automation plan, although original discussions about the plan anticipated that the project would be complete by mid-2000. The department's goal in 2000 was to have ACIS fully retired and replaced by PRO-Files by the end of the 2003 biennium. Currently, the department hopes to have all significant portions of ACIS retired by the end of the 2003 biennium. Because the amount of programming is not known until processes are evaluated and data needs are clearly defined for each phase, a final completion date has not been set.

Several factors have contributed to the delay in the full implementation of the department's software project. Some of the factors include: 1) the decision by the department to develop a new database system rather than update ACIS; 2) differing visions of the project between the programmers and management; 3) staff turnover; 4) fiscal constraints; and 5) determination by an outside analyst in November of 1999 that several major shortfalls needed to be corrected before the project could move forward.

FINANCIAL STATUS

Approximately \$2.0 million has been expended in information technology bonds and earned interest, in addition to the \$0.4 million that was included as part of the department's base budget for the 7.5 FTE and ongoing operating costs of the automation plan and system. Major expenditures include: 1) consultants and training; 2) the installation of fiber optic cable at Montana State Prison and Pine Hills; 3) the electronic linking of 25 department locations; 4) the purchase of software; 5) the purchase and installation of live fingerprint scan systems for Great Falls, Missoula, Glendive and Montana State Prison; 6) the purchase and installation of advanced video technology for booking and photo lineups; 7) the upgrade of the server; 8) the upgrade and installation of more than 250 computers; and 9) fixing Y2K problems.

With the hardware, software, and infrastructure needs completed, no additional funds were requested for the 2001 or 2003 biennia for this project and the 2001 legislature reduced the base expenditures in travel, training, and recruitment by over \$121,000 each year. A portion of the \$121,000 reduction was based on the determination that some travel and training costs would not be continuing now that the major development of PRO-Files was complete. The department states that no additional funds will be requested for the 2005 biennium.

COMPONENTS OF THE SYSTEM AND DATA NEEDS STATUS

As reported in the fall of 2000, the first four major components listed in Table 1 have been completed. These include: 1) the implementation of the electronic fingerprint system; 2) the development of the infrastructure and the electronic linking of 25 locations; 3) the purchase or lease of hardware/software to connect correctional facilities throughout Montana; and 4) the upgrade of the server to handle the new database. The electronic imaging system (item 5 in Table 1) has been in place since the fall of 2000, but photos are not being transmitted. The ability to transmit photos should take place in the near future, as an upgrade in the operating system was required and has been completed. Work towards item 6, integration of a criminal justice information network (otherwise known as the Montana Criminal Justice Information System Project or MCJISP) has been taking place over the past five years. A significant milestone was reached last summer with the implementation of the Justice, ACIS, Query System (JAQS). This connection between the databases of Corrections and Justice allows officers throughout the state and nation to find out the correctional status of a suspect within minutes.

Some of the information identified as the data needs of the new system (items 7 through 21 in Table 1) is still stored in ACIS, but can be readily accessed through Crystal Reports. In the future, all data will be stored in PRO-Files. In the past, even though the information was captured in ACIS, there was not the ability to extract the data elements separately to produce meaningful reports. In addition, the reliability of the data was questionable because ACIS was designed in a fashion that facilitated the entering of incomplete or inaccurate information. PRO-Files will capture all of this data, which will be made available through a reporting system.

Table 2		
Department of Corrections		
Phases of Automation Plan		
Phase	Description	Available
Phase I	Offender demographics	Nov. 1, 2000
Phase II	Offender movement	May 1, 2001
Phase III	Legal information	Nov. 1, 2001
Phase IV	Classification	May 1, 2002

Due to the scale of PRO-Files, the department made a decision to roll out the system in phases. Table 2 gives a brief explanation of what each of the first four phases is designed to provide and the timeline that was provided to the Legislative Finance Committee in September of 2000. The rollout of Phase II was delayed by close to six months and therefore the rest

of the phases will be delayed. Staff turnover and retraining delayed the programming, as all of the work is being done in-house.

As was reported in the last PRO-Files report, the needs of the users could change the order that phases are rolled out and this has changed slightly. The probation and parole officer's risk and needs assessment tool was outdated, so development of the new tool was provided in Phase II. The current plan is to include offender movement with legal information in Phase III and possibly add disciplinary information to classification in Phase IV.

Even though it may be some time before all of the phases are rolled out, the department now has the capability to extract a great deal of this data from ACIS. Therefore, even though the phase in PRO-Files may not be available, much of this information can be obtained by the reporting system that obtains the information from both systems.

The department has taken strides in improving the access to information and the integrity of the information is improved with PRO-Files. There is potential for the new system to provide more complete information than ACIS. Yet at this time, the system does not handle the more complex functions, such as providing data that would allow the legislature to determine the effectiveness of any programming or treatment. The systems track education and programming, but there is no ability to connect that information with improved behavior or a reduction in recidivism.

CONCLUSION

As with the development of most new systems, this project has not been problem free. The update on PRO-Files given to the Legislative Finance Committee in the fall of 2000 stated it was difficult to evaluate whether the money appropriated and expended would yield the expected results because the beginning phases of the system are only in the testing phase. Over a year later, it still remains to be seen whether all of the data needs requested by the legislature will be provided when the system is complete. Because of the reporting software, the department is able to access much more information than in the past and that information was used by the 2001 legislature in making policy decisions regarding the fourth driving under the influence offense.

Some of the critical data that would enable the legislature to make decisions on where resources are most effective in impacting correction populations is still not available. The department states this information will eventually be provided by the system and is currently working with the Law, Justice, and Indian Affairs Committee and the Department of Correction's Advisory Council in identifying additional data elements that need to be captured. The department has established a Core Treatment Programs Committee, which is currently setting outcome measures for existing core treatment programs. Department policy states that outcome measures need to be defined prior to any new programming being introduced. The ability of the system to provide data for outcome measures will be integral to this system enabling the legislature in making policy decisions on ways to impact populations.

As a side note, the department has approached a member of the Board of Regents with a proposal to have university students and faculty assist in the evaluation of correctional programs. The department anticipates having this proposal discussed at the March Regents meeting.

OPTIONS:

Option 1: Request the department provide the Legislative Finance Committee a listing of the data elements that will be tracked in PRO-Files, in particular those elements that will allow the department and legislature to determine the effectiveness of programming and its impact on recidivism. This would allow a dialogue between the committee and department and possibly afford the committee input if all data needs the committee feels important are not currently planned to be tracked.

Option 2: Request the department provide an estimated timeline of when treatment/programming data will be tracked and available for use in policy decisions.

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